

Agricultural Lands BMPs

Agricultural Conservation

- **Acquisition in fee** ([FI Planning Toolbox Agricultural Land Conservation Tools](#)) is the purchase of land for conservation by local government, agency or land trust. Property can be deed restricted to agricultural use and leased or sold to keep in or place back into agricultural production.
- **Agricultural zoning** is the establishment of a zoning district where allowable land uses and land development are compatible with agricultural activities. Typically used where the desire is to preserve land and people in agricultural activities. There are two general types of agricultural zoning exclusive and non-exclusive. Non-exclusive zoning is the least restrictive stating a preference for agricultural land uses, but not prohibiting other uses, typically supportive of agricultural activities. Exclusive zoning typically prohibits non-agricultural, retail and non-residential uses.
- **Conservation easement** is a deed restriction is voluntarily place on land, limiting the land to specific uses and to protect from development. Agricultural conservation easements are designed to protect farm land and/or also protect resources such as productive agricultural land, ground and surface water, wildlife habitat, historic sites or scenic views. They are flexible documents tailored to each property and the needs of individual landowners. The agricultural conservation easement may cover an entire parcel or portions of a property. The landowner (grantor) authorizes a qualified conservation organization or public agency (grantee) to monitor and enforce the restrictions set forth in the agreement. The landowner retains title and right to use their land for agricultural purposes and still restrict public access. The agreement is legally binding on all future landowners for the specific time period established. Conservation easements may be donated for tax benefits or sold as a transfer of development rights.
- **Contingent valuation survey** is a survey-based economic technique to determine the value of non-market resources, typically agricultural or environmental areas. The survey is used to directly ask people how much they would be willing to pay for specific environmental or agricultural services.

Economic Incentives

- **Green payments** are a method to provide farmers economic benefit for conservation activities providing environmental services required by the broader community. Governments would look first to rural, agricultural land to provide required environmental services such as stormwater attenuation and treatment, cleaner air, groundwater supply and recharge, wildlife habitat, open space, areas for recreation connections between environmentally sensitive areas, creating and protecting wetlands, and sequestering carbon (climate change). These services can be provided on agricultural lands well equipped for specific services and whose economic value is quantifiable.

- **Purchase of development rights (PDR)** works like conservation easement with the development rights being sold to private conservation organization or public agency. CRC has developed a suite of model ordinances for local governments interested in establishing a resource land protection programs including a PDR program.
- **Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)** programs allow the transfer of development rights from one parcel of land to another in a designated growth area. This is one means of directing development away from environmentally sensitive and agricultural lands to locations with existing municipal services, usually designated by local governments to receive TDRs. TDR's is included in the CRC's suite of resource land protection model ordinances.